

Target Zero Awards

Achievements in Traffic Safety

1. Category

- ☒ Impaired Driving
- ☐ Speed-Related Collisions
- ☒ Occupant Protection
- ☐ Run-Off-Road Collisions
- ☐ Intersection Collisions
- ☐ Traffic Data Systems

2. Entry Name

Project/Program Title: Night Emphasis Enforcement Team

Individual/Group Name: Washington State Patrol (Detachment 9)

3. Contact Information for person submitting entry

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4. Identify the project, program, or effort. This is the executive summary of the entry that describes

a) The situation or problem - In late 2006 The Washington State Patrol, District 7 (Snohomish, Skagit, Island and Whatcom counties) discussed the concern of alcohol and drug impaired drivers that occupy our roadway's and create a greater risk of injury and/or death to the citizens of Washington State. A need for additional troopers able to focus on traffic safety violations predominately occurring during hours of darkness was addressed.

While District 7 remains a leader within the state for impaired driver apprehension a need was identified in the area of fatal and injury collision causing traffic violations occurring during hours of darkness. History has shown that 47 percent of traffic deaths in Washington State are involving impaired drivers. While there is an increase of impaired drivers during night time hours, there is also a disturbing decrease of seat belt use during the same period. Information provided by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission indicates night time seat belt usage in Washington State is at 86 percent. This is substantially lower than the 96 percent rate of usage during daytime hours.

Additionally, 63 percent of night time fatalities are involving persons not wearing a safety restraint. There is a clear correlation between these violations and the elevated number of serious injury and fatal collisions occurring at night.

b) Actions taken - In response to the information provided District 7 established the Night Emphasis Enforcement Team (NEET), a five person detachment made up of four troopers and a sergeant. This detachment was created with a focus on proactive enforcement during night time hours when impaired driving and non-seatbelt usage is most prevalent. The District selected highly trained, experienced and motivated troopers to fill the detachment.

The Night Emphasis Enforcement Team has been actively involved with the Snohomish County DUI Task Force. It participated in all the multi agency traffic safety emphasis patrols within Snohomish County throughout the year and attended victim witness panels. NEET has nurtured the relationship with victims, prosecutors, court personnel, media and officers from other agencies by granting educational rides with its troopers. This has assisted in bridging the gap developing a unified stance toward impaired driver apprehension.

During the night time focus the NEET detachment was involved with the Night Time Seat Belt Emphasis (NTSBE) project. This project is focused on occupants of motor vehicle not wearing their seat belts during hours of darkness. NEET's involvement in this emphasis was primarily in the area of enforcement.

In addition to the nightly efforts of the Night Emphasis Enforcement Team, a focus was placed on citizen education and awareness. NEET has been the focus of several articles published in The Everett Herald (largest local paper). These articles discuss, at a local level, the dangers of impaired driving, non-seat belt usage and speeding. In addition to these articles NEET has been featured in several news stories.

c) The result - The development of the Night Emphasis Enforcement Team has resulted in the apprehension of 820 impaired drivers from January 1, 2007 through November 15, 2007. These four troopers are responsible for 28 percent of the DUI arrests made within APA 33 (Marysville) in 2007. The results of their efforts are staggering, as DUI related collisions are down 17% on Interstates and 11% on State Routes in areas where NEET patrols nightly. The result is 46 fewer DUI collisions in our community.

In addition, 849 night time seatbelts violators have been contacted, with an enforcement rate of 97 percent. These efforts have been instrumental in the 93 percent District wide increase of nighttime seatbelt citations. Non-belted fatalities are down 7 percent as a result of these efforts.

During 2007, the four troopers of NEET have contacted 4,790 violators, removed 820 impaired drivers from our roadways, issued 849 seatbelt citations and made 127 drug arrests. These efforts have resulted in a 35 percent decrease in local fatalities.

5. Specify the proven strategies, best practices, or innovative strategies with a strong evaluation component used.

District 7 has created a competitive advantage in the apprehension of impaired drivers by selecting troopers who excel, and possess the desire to apprehend and detect impaired drivers. These troopers have been released from the responsibilities of responding to non-emergency calls for service so they may proactively focus their efforts on collision causing traffic offenses and criminal interdiction. Doing so has allowed this team to arrest over 20 percent of the 4,232 DUI arrests made in District 7.

These practices have proven to be an effective tool in removing impaired drivers from the roadways and detecting those not wearing seatbelts during hours of darkness. The Night Emphasis Enforcement Teams efforts have shown a positive impact within the community in which it serves. They are a tremendous success and an effective tool as we continue to work toward our goal of Target Zero.